



FISHERIES ADVISORY COUNCIL - A group of dedicated citizens from all regions of the state working together for fish and fishing in Connecticut.

January 30, 2023

Senator Lopes, Representative Gresko
Environment Committee Co-Chairs
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106

Environment Committee Public Hearing – January 30, 2023

H.B. No. 6484 – AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN HARVESTING OF HORSESHOEE CRABS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on H.B. 6484. The Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council (FAC) represents the interests of fish, fish habitat, and anglers throughout the State of Connecticut. Member organizations include the CT Surfcasters Association, CT Bass Nation, Trout Unlimited, CT River Salmon Association, and many others.

The Fisheries Advisory Council supports H.B. 6484 but believes an additional investment of resources is needed to fully achieve the intent of the legislation. Horseshoe crabs are an important component of the food web and ecology of Long Island Sound. The crabs feed along the bottom on a variety of organic matter and, in turn, produce a prolific amount of energy rich eggs that are deposited on our beaches and feasted upon by migratory and resident shorebirds. Recent stock assessment data compiled by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has confirmed that the horseshoe crab population in and around Long Island Sound has been declining for many years. Fishery closures have been applied to conserve and recover other important forage species found to be at low abundance and declining in Connecticut waters (ex. alewife and blueback herring). The FAC agrees that it is now time to apply this same approach to horseshoe crabs by closing the fishery. However, the FAC also recognizes that additional staff and resources are needed in order for the DEEP Fisheries Division to do the science necessary to effectively conserve and manage non-game species such as horseshoe crabs and river herring. In addition, laws protecting these species require effective enforcement. The FAC believes the number of Environmental Conservation Police Officers should be increased as it is our understanding that the number of officers in the field is at its lowest point in many years.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. The Fisheries Advisory Council is available at your request to provide information or respond to questions.

Testimony Submitted by William Hyatt, Vice-Chair, on behalf of the Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council.